TRANSCRIPT—CYNTHIA E. HALLUM

Interviewee: Cynthia E. Hallum

Interviewer: Pat Fitzpatrick

Interview Date: June 19, 2017

Location: 67 Haywood Street, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, N.C.

Length: 1 digital recording; 01:38:43

Transcriber: Pat Fitzpatrick

Transcription Date: 2017

Pat Fitzpatrick: Today I am at Pack Memorial Library with Cynthia Hallum, and I know a few things about her, and it's hard not to ask more questions up front. But we'll turn on the recorder now and get a picture of her childhood and her growing up. I don't know where she grew up in Asheville, so this will be a story for me here, as well. So where did you grow up?

Cynthia Hallum: The first 11 years of my life was in what they call Lee Walker Heights. It still exists. It's now part of Asheville Housing Authority and they have been through Jump Street, but it was the first housing apartment complex for--at that time we were called Negroes--for Negroes in Asheville, North Carolina.

PF: And what year was this?

CH: We moved in in 1951, the year I was born. And in order to live there, the man of the house had to have a job. That's how you got in. Otherwise you couldn't move in there. It has changed a great deal over the years with the Asheville Housing Authority. I don't

know if there was Asheville Housing Authority then, at that time, but it ended up with the nickname Diaper Hill because that's when the people washed, had the old-timey wringer washers and hung their clothes outdoors and everybody up there seemed like that had babies. So the place was full of those white diapers and they were blowing in the wind and they got the nickname Diaper Hill.

PF: I love that. I like the image of that.

CH: Yeah, I grew up there. And I grew up during the time of, segregation was still big in Asheville, North Carolina. I remember very well that certain places we could not go.

PF: Like what? What pops into your mind?

CH: The movie theaters. There was a place in different places where they would have over this "Colored." But for colored people to get in line in Kress's, the colored people had to go downstairs to that snack place to get their hotdogs, where the whites could go to another place. They had water fountains with "Colored" over it and "White" over it and my mama would not allow us to drink out of them. She said they spit in them, the white people would spit in them. They also had one place which was under the Pack Square monument that they had some colored bathrooms. But my mother would not allow us to go in those. She said they were filthy. So before we left home to go anywhere, we had to drink what we wanted to drink, use the bathroom. Because if we were out, like downtown, we didn't, mama wouldn't allow that. So I graduated in 1969. I was a member of the last all-Black class of high school to graduate in Asheville, North Carolina.

PF: That late. I guess I thought it was earlier.

CH: Well, they started integration much earlier. They started the integration with--they didn't have kindergarten when I first started school. But they started at kindergarten and first grade as integrating, and the next year they added a grade and they'd add a grade and add a grade, so by 1969 they had gone through all the grades of elementary and high school. That was going to be the last year for all-Black high school. They had already integrated the other schools by, where you went then was by the neighborhood you lived in, school districts they called them. Now, in the elementary school, the child can go to any district they want to, in the elementary. We used to laugh and say they thought we were stupid because at that time it was South French Broad High School. They wouldn't let us carry the name over, Stephens-Lee. We fought for it, we asked for it, had meetings for it. They would not let us carry the name Stephens-Lee over, because that was the well-known high school of Asheville, North Carolina. They were known for the band and many other things. But they would not let us take that name over so they named the school South French Broad High School. We tell people we went to the no-name high school, because over the years in filling out job applications or putting down references where they ask "Where did you go to high school," many job would come back and ask me, "This school doesn't exist." I said, "Put it in under the name 'Stephens-Lee' and see what happens." I said, "It truly did exist." Four years on and we used to say they thought we were stupid. Why would you build two high schools that close together, South French Broad and Lee Edwards, at that time. But they did close down South French Broad after '69. The class of '69 and '70 at South French Broad was all ninth graders. Then over the years they changed it and changed it, till they finally got it to the Asheville Middle School and that's what the name still is. I got tickled, just a few years ago, rather this

year, when they finished tearing it down. They lied and said the school was over 60 years old and outdated. They lied. I haven't been out of high school for 60 years. So again, we used to say to whites, we had some of the nicest biology labs and the chemistry lab and all that was, over the years, you know, destroyed or whatever, and they made it a middle school because they didn't need those classes. But to me the State were wasting money, just to do what they want. Why did they spend all that money on all those nice labs? During my high school years we did such things as we tried to keep our school alive and active, so you would have fund-raisers to have things.

PF: Now that was at Stephens-Lee?

CH: No.

PF: At Asheville.

CH: Yeah. I was upset because I didn't get to go to Stephens-Lee. I went to South French Broad the beginning of my freshman year. I'm the youngest of six children. My mama, my daddy and all my siblings had gotten to go to Stephens-Lee. I was the only one didn't get to go. I was upset about it, but nothing I could do about it. But even during those years, it was interesting the things that they would do to us. I'm very straightforward. Very blunt, and I don't mean to offend anybody, but I felt like the white man just called us stupid. They could tell us anything, we were supposed to accept it and believe it. So we had our different protests and different things. I served on a committee my senior year of high school where it was the seniors from Lee Edwards and the seniors from South French Broad got together, put a questionnaire together and we met at the YWCA, which at that time was the Black YWCA on South French Broad, to compose our questionnaire,

pass them out to every student in each school and then we got back together to compose what the students wanted. It took us months to do this. But we knew the students, when they had their final leave, they were going to do what they wanted to. And they did. At that time the only thing they gave us, and they still didn't give it to us, because South French Broad and Stephens-Lee school colors were maroon and gray, Lee Edwards school colors was maroon and Black. So we decided on the maroon and white to be our school colors. If you stop and look, Asheville High's colors mainly are maroon and Black, so they really didn't give it to us. We decided that for grade point average--at South French Broad, to be in any club, you had to maintain a C grade point average. So we were combining all the clubs together. They didn't give it to us. They kept what clubs they wanted. We were having our final meetings with the superintendent and other quote unquote adults. I used to get kicked out of every meeting because I was outspoken and I told them exactly how I felt, that they were wasting our time, trying to pacify us, because they were lying to us. Bottom line, they were just lying to do what they wanted to do. And to a point, they still do that. And so Asheville was interesting growing up. As a little child, I never forget the Christmas parade. We got to go every year, and how the men would all the big bunches of balloons would stand in front of the Black kids, so we couldn't see the parade. And my mother said to a man--don't forget, my mother was a seamstress, and seamstress normally always keep a safety pin on them somewhere. And my mother kept saying to the man, "Will you move, please. You're blocking, my children can't see. Will you move, please, you're blocking." And it was just, things were still segregated, so we had one group of Blacks but it was a large group of Blacks, and the man wouldn't move, so my mama politely went in, took her safety pin off, started

popping his balloons left and right. He turned around and she said, "If you want to you can try it." And he politely moved. My mother was five feet tall. Her name was Nannie and she was well known in the city. Nobody messed with Nannie Hallum. She was short, but she didn't take nothing off nobody. She didn't start it, but it was known that she would finish it.

PF: Tell me her complete name.

CH: Nannie Kennedy Hallum. She was raised in Black Mountain.

PF: Now your father?

CH: His name was Hayes Edward Hallum. His name was Hazel Edward Hallum.

PF: Hazel.

CH: Yeah, and he preferred being called Edward Hallum, H. Edward Hallum. The story was told that his mother was mad at his daddy when he was born. His daddy's name was Hayes. So she named him Hazel instead of Hayes.

PF: Spelled like the woman's name, H-a-z-e-l.

CH: Yes.

PF: Take it out on the kid, huh?

CH: Yep, that's what he lived with. He was very tall and thin. They called him Slim. He was six four and a half and the most he ever weighed was 140. My mother was five feet even and she weighed close to 200 pounds. And she backed up anything she said. She was an excellent cook. A very good seamstress, extremely good seamstress. And she ran

the household. My daddy would tell you, if you asked him something, he'd say, "Have you asked your mama?" You say, "No." He'd say, "Ask your mama. She runs the house. I pay the bills." That's the way it goes, so.

PF: And what did he do for a living?

CH: It was interesting. My daddy was considered a Black man with a good job in Asheville. He was the first bag boy at an A&P that was at the bottom of Lee Walker Heights hill. Right now it's a dentistry place, Dental Smiles. It's a dentistry place. But that was where one of the A&P's were in Asheville. In fact, it might have been the only one at that time. Like I say, this was in the fifties. And he also had a job as quote unquote the head janitor at what was at that time the Doctors Building, which is now Mission Hospital. There's a ball there now in the process of tearing it down. I was born, it was interesting because I was born in Asheville Colored Hospital, which in time became Jessie Ray's Funeral Home. Then it became Gene Ellison's law office. And now it's torn down. But out of my mother's six children, my sister next to me and myself, we were the only two born in the hospital. By then it was the law, supposedly, you had to have your children in the hospital. And I think it's interesting that I've lived long enough, I see things turn around. Because now if you have a legal person, or even a RN, they call them nurses or--

PF: Midwives?

CH: Midwives, you can have children at home again. I say, "My, I've lived long enough I've seen fashions go around in a circle." Basically now you can wear anything.

PF: Any place, any function.

CH: Yeah, yeah. And it used to be how people dressed for this, dressed for that.

PF: In fact, now you can get, down in the medical area, you can have your baby in a bathtub, under water, at the birth center.

CH: Yeah, supposed to be easier. I worked at the hospital a great deal of my life, in the medical field, so I've seen how things turn around in that area, too. Yeah, I've seen those birthing tubs. And a lot of women start out in them, but a lot of them don't make it because of the pain. Yeah, it's not because of the water, they just--the ones I have been blessed to see, it started out with their first child. They didn't know how bad their labor pains would be. And urban renewal came through--

PF: Wait, let's back up. Let's finish one area. When you lived in Lee Walker Heights, was that integrated at all?

CH: No. That was the Black, or the colored, housing project. At that time, I'm trying to get it right, Pisgah View was the white one. Pisgah View was much larger and older than Lee Walker Heights, but it was all white.

PF: And it's further out, isn't it? I mean, where is it located exactly?

CH: It's out in West Asheville.

PF: Okay.

CH: Is it Hansel Street you turn on? No, not Brevard Road. It's out in the West Asheville area. I think it's Hansel Street you turn on. I think. I'm not sure. But it was three times

bigger than Lee Walker Heights still is. Yeah. Again, I've gotten to see things turn around.

PF: Are they all integrated now?

CH: Yes.

PF: They would have to be, I would think.

CH: Yeah, that's one of the times I was shocked. In the eighties, I helped do an election and I was going out passing out papers, knocking on people's doors. And a white woman came to the door in Lee Walker Heights. My mouth fell wide open. I just stood there staring for a few seconds, then I said, "Excuse me, ma'am. I'm sorry. I forgot my train of thought." And I did. It shocked me that much. And Lee Walker Heights, to my knowledge, is still majority Black. But Pisgah View is now majority Spanish-speaking people, I think, and Blacks. Is not many whites out there.

PF: I know out of there Hispanics in West Asheville, so that's appropriate in that respect.

CH: Now, a large very population out there. Where we as Black--I still personally like the term Black because the African American. That's my personal point of view, because as you do studies in histories, there's no guarantee all Black people are from Africa and I--it bothers me the way Africa is spoken of, like it's the country. It's a continent with approximately 54 countries in it, or if not more, there's probably more little country don't know about. So I prefer to being called a Black. And that's what I put down. I do all kind of things because as light as I am, I have people to ask me different things. Sometimes on

applications I'll check every nationality. They say, "Why you do that?" I'm so mixed up I don't know what I am.

PF: I'm like that. I called my Heinz 57 varieties because, I'm obviously very light skinned, but I know that I'm all the British Isles and my background has some French thrown in, but I don't know how much of each.

CH: Well, I was told my grandmother was half Cherokee on my mother's side. My grandmother was half Cherokee, half Black. But her daddy was half Italian and half Black. That's my mama's side.

PF: That's an interesting mixture.

CH: Yeah. And on my daddy's side, his mama was half Black from the country of India and half Black. And his daddy was half Black and half German. So I say to people "What am I?" And I say "I'm human." And I do that sometime on applications to be different. A race, I put human, because there's only one race. And I remember doing a season that that wasn't on applications anymore, but now it's back again. Because everybody's trying to figure out what quarter of this they have and whether they have so much money from the government. I got in trouble once, didn't realize it, but the census, I didn't know that you had to fill them out. I was tired of them, so I didn't fill mine out and they called me on the phone. And I said, "No, I didn't fill it out." Well, you don't fill it out in by such and such and you'll be fined. I said, "Okay." And I filled it out and I checked every nationality on it and sent it back in. So then they called me again and they got it and the lady said, "You filled out every nationality." I said, "Ma'am, by my voice, what color am I?" And she hesitated. I said, "You can't offend me." I said, "Don't worry about your [ ]. By my voice,

what color am I?" She says "You're African American." I said, "But if you saw my face, or saw me at a distance, you'd say I was something else." I said, "I'm going to a human being. I'm so mixed up I just need to know I'm a human being." And she said, "So should we add other?" I said, "Yes, you should," and I noticed ten years later it was, it had been added.

PF: Yeah.

CH: And I thought wow. I probably wasn't the only one, you know, but I think people, when you truly grow in life, you realize human beings. And we come in all shapes, colors, forms, fashions, personalities, in every nationality.

PF: This is true. And we only know what we have been told.

CH: That's right.

PF: Or even that, mine doesn't go back very far. I can only track it back to my--I can't go beyond my grandparents, really. They were deceased but one and I never grew up around that one because my parents had gone to California during the Depression. They kept in touch but, you know, people didn't go into those things like they do now. They talked about what life was like back there but they didn't talk about their ancestry. It wasn't a big thing then.

CH: No. They made it a bigger thing now. Somebody even told me, "You ought to have that DNA test." I said, "I'm not paying all that money to tell me I'm a human being that's mixed up."

PF: I'd like to know just from the curiosity standpoint. But then my children are something else because they have my husband's blend in there. So I'd have to have at least one of them done to really know.

CH: They did a special TV deal the other night where they were having triplets done to show how inaccurate they can be. They had a set of triplets and each one of them, by their DNA, was from different things. And everybody is saying, "How is that possible, the same parents?" So we don't know. You have to be so careful because there's so many money gimmicks.

PF: That's true, too. Would I believe it if I got it? But let's go back to your childhood. Let's try to stay in order, which it's hard to do [Laughter] with each thing. When you think of your childhood, and you lived there how long?

CH: First eleven years of my life.

PF: And then, so what were your childhood activities? What comes to your mind, the things you liked the best, the least?

CH: We got to play outdoors a lot.

PF: Everybody says that. All the way from the people that are 50 something to 80 something.

CH: We enjoyed playing outdoors. You got to play the ring games and the different sports and just sitting around talking. I remember making mud pies and eating them. So mud must not have been bad in those days. I remember how different things that happened, we could go in the woods near Lee Walker Heights and find pure Black dirt.

Like if somebody's mama wanted to repot their flowers, you didn't go to the store to buy it. They'd give you a brown paper bag. We didn't have all these plastic bags and you would go dig up that Black dirt. I remember a young lady broke her ankle when we were growing up and my mother's mother knew all the old-timey remedies and my mother knew them, which my grandmother was still alive the first ten years of my life.

PF: Did she live with you?

CH: No. Well, she lived in Black Mountain, up on the hill. My aunt, my mother's sister, was secretary of Stephens-Lee for 30-some years. They lived together in Black Mountain. But this young lady broke her ankle. No matter what they did, how many times she went to the doctor, it wasn't healing. So somebody told her, "Go ask Nannie Hallum," that's my mama. My mama said, "Well, let me call my mama." And she did. And my grandmama said, "Get a white rag. Get some red mud clay and make a poultice. Pack it very good around that thing, wrap it in white sheet or something, and keep it there for three solid days." And they did what my grandmother said. They took it off in three days. It was hard, they hit and it fell apart, like dirt would do. All the swelling and all the infection and the lady's ankle was back to normal.

PF: Wow.

CH: And there's a person that had a baby, or for a baby with a bad cold, I listened to the doctors and it didn't work and mama helped me. And I don't know why, but she chose--in those days, people cooked all day long. She chose a, said it had to be a red-skinned onion. She took a red-skinned onion, cut it real thin, and put brown sugar over it and set it on the back of the stove. Not in the stove or boil it, set it on the back of the stove and just kept it

there. And by the end of the day it was a very thick syrup. And I gave my baby, at that time she might have been three or four months old, a baby spoon of this--I gave her one or two. I don't remember now because she's 46 years old. I gave it to her and the next morning she had the most notorious, stinking bowel movement and it was fold of cold. And that cold was gone.

PF: Gosh. How old was the baby?

CH: I think about three or four months old.

PF: Oh, little little.

CH: Yeah, a little baby. I ran to the doctor, natural. My mama, you know how they old-timey, but anyway, her old-timey remedies worked. And she used to make homemade cough syrup and it was so well known people would catch a cold and they'd call her or come to her, "Miss Hallum, I need some cough syrup." And she made it up to the point that you couldn't find rock candy anymore, because it was made out of rock candy, home honey--not just store bought honey, but somebody would have it. It was made out of rock candy, honey and bourbon, yeah and lemon juice. And it would knock your cold out and you, too.

[Laughter.]

PF: Maybe that was the secret.

CH: But playing outdoors and we had, again, everything was still segregated. We had, at the very end of College Street, which is now meet the tunnel, that's where the Black YWCA was in those years. And we had summer camp.

PF: Now, that was near, I believe, what was the Allen Center?

CH: Oh, yeah, Allen High School.

PF: Oh.

CH: See, I went to church right across the street from it, Berry Temple United Methodist Church was one of the parent churches for Allen High School, which was a private school.

PF: Right. Geraldine had gone to the Allen School. That's the first place I'd ever heard of that and I believe it was a Presbyterian thing that started it?

CH: Methodist maybe. My oldest sister went there. You had to be ladies, told you how to be a lady and all that good stuff. There was a private all-girl high school, people from all over sent their children there, because they lived there, living quarters and everything. And I remember it so well. Like I say, I went to the church across the street from it. You had Allen High School across the street with Berry Temple and then right next to Allen High School was Hopkins Chapel. So it's according to what the parents wanted to where the child was from. Every Sunday morning you'd see them lined up in straight lines and, you know, they went to different churches.

PF: Oh, uh-huh. Yeah. It was mission, even though it was Methodist background. That's interesting.

CH: Yeah.

PF: Was that integrated? I don't think--

CH: No, no, no. To my knowledge, they had some white teachers. But the students were all Black. I never seen a white student in them. Yeah, Allen High School. It was down--a little bit down the street was the Y, the Black Y, and I remember it real well.

PF: Now when you left Lee Walker Heights where did you go? Excuse me. Where did you--those first eleven years, where did you go to school then?

CH: Livingston Street Elementary. You went to Livingston Street--kindergarten didn't exist. You went to your neighborhood elementary school, which we had three of them, if I can remember right. Livingston Street, Hill Street and--oh, I can't remember the name of it. It's now--it's where the school board meets. Oh, I can't remember. It's in the Stumptown area--East End area. [Isaac Dixon, 90 Montford Avenue]. Three elementary schools at that time. Lucy Herring, Lucy Herring was the last name. Before they was named something else, because Lucy Herring was one of the highly educated Black women in this city. And that building where the school board is and everything is still called Lucy Herring. Yeah. That's where the other Black elementary school was. I remember when they tore it down and rebuilt it.

PF: And then where did you move from Lee Walker Heights?

CH: To Magnolia. Went to Magnolia. It was my senior year. No, no. From Lee Walker Heights we moved to South French Broad. We moved from Lee Walker Heights to South French Broad.

PF: You lived on South French Broad.

CH: That's right, right across the street--we lived directly across the street from the high school and--wait a minute. I'm trying to remember the number. Hmmm. That was my high school years. Before we left Lee Walker Heights I was going to Magnolia. We went to Magnolia.

PF: You would have been eleven when you arrived there.

CH: Yeah, and then I went to middle school, which was the Hill Street. The Hill Street was an all-Black school but it was kindergarten all the way through eighth grade. So you went to Livingston Street through the sixth grade. And then you went to Hill Street, six, seven--no, seventh and eighth grade you had to go to Hill Street. Seventh and eighth. Kindergarten through sixth grade was your elementary. First grade, not kindergarten. First grade through the sixth grade was your elementary years, and then you went to Hill Street for your middle school, then on to the high school. And we lived on Magnolia. And by the time we got to the high school, we lived on South French Broad.

PF: Now where is Magnolia?

CH: Magnolia I would say is on the west side, not west. Northwest, northwest. You know where Montford Avenue is?

PF: Yes.

CH: Magnolia is off Montford.

PF: Oh. Oh, I do know Magnolia. Yes, it goes over to Broadway.

CH: Yes. Yes, yes.

PF: Yes, I know exactly where that is.

CH: It's a little street right there, I think it's Cumberland?

PF: Yes, it crosses kind of that, not far off of that. Yes.

CH: Let's see, Cumberland and--

PF: It's a short kind of street.

CH: Yes and that house is still there. In fact, they turned it into a duplex, but we lived in the whole house.

PF: And what was the number there?

CH: 77. I do believe that's 77 Magnolia Avenue. It's on the corner of Magnolia and Cumberland. Yeah. We left Lee Walker Heights and moved to Clingman Avenue. Clingman Avenue was full of homes then and we lived in a big old house on Clingman Avenue. Never will forget it. It had six bedrooms. And each one of us had our own room because my sister and I fell out. She got mad and moved in the bedroom down the hall. I got mad and moved in the bedroom across the hall. And our bedrooms was basically empty. Our brothers had a bedroom together. My oldest sister had her own room. It was the Cannons old home. Doesn't exist anymore. It was torn down and is now part of the parking lot which was behind Nissan which some other car dealership bought it and now it's just empty. Yeah.

PF: That whole area is changing fast down there. Oh, my gosh. It's amazing. Now did you, how did your life change when you moved to the different places? You just continued on about the same? Of course, you were getting older.

CH: I was getting older and just continuing on about the same, because my mama ran her house.

[Laughter.]

CH: Yeah, all the things you heard other people saying you do. I'll never forget I wanted to quit school. I never liked school. So in the fifth grade I announced to my mama, saying "When I get to be old enough, I'm quitting." She just looked at me and smiled. I was in the fifth grade. I didn't care for my teacher. I didn't care for school. But in my mama's house you went to school, you made a decent grade. She didn't play that. And the day I turned 16 I announced to my mama, "I am now 16. Legally I can quit school." She says, "Legally you can. But the day you quit, you have somewhere else to lay your head and have someone supporting yourself, because it won't be here or from me. If you live in this house, you will go to school." And in that day you didn't jump up and run to a friend's house to spend the night or stay a few days. That didn't work. No. You didn't do that. So after a while I figured out I might as well stay in school and get it over with, because it wasn't going to work. Not from my mama, no. She was blessed--they wanted to interview her, but she never would do it. I can't remember who the lady was who was write the book. But my mama was--it was considered a great accomplishment because she had six children, all six graduated from high school. All the ones who had graduated, including myself, had decent jobs or had gone on to better themselves, whether it was joining the

service or going to school, and that was sort of unheard of in that time and era. Usually we dropped out at a certain age. At that time, a lot of Black males quit school, they joined the service, because that's the only way they could get a future. And 16, at one time, you could go in the army at 16. And then it moved on up, and you did not have to have a high school diploma at one time, to go in the army or the marines. To go in the air force you had to have a high school diploma. All three of my brothers were in the air force after they graduated high school. I don't remember what it was for the navy. So so much has changed. But now, from what I know, for all of them to get into them you have to have a high school diploma.

PF: I believe so.

CH: But it used to be that was just survival. Just pure survival. But now you still do have some meals and that's the only way they know they can get a college education or they can better themselves, to go in the service. So some of them that's what they do and some of them have the desire to go, you know. So much has changed. One of the things I remember as a child, fifth grade we had a Weekly Reader that you got every week.

PF: Oh, I had that.

CH: Yeah. And it used to talk about the future a lot. And I tell people what I remember from reading so many. Because it was one of the requirements. Fifth grade you had to read the Weekly Reader--

PF: During class.

CH: Yeah, and so many of the things they talked about I've seen come to pass in my lifetime. Like one of the main things that everybody, they call it now "face time," where you could look at each other over the telephone. I remember them talking about that invention. And you know, it's nothing like they said it would be but it is here and just so many other things. I think it's that we've had more inventions to come to pass in the past 50 years than we've had since the records have started being kept. And I get tickled when different things happen, "I remember reading about that. I've still got a decent mind."

PF: Back then it was like science fiction.

CH: Oh, yeah, it was, it really was. You'd think "That's never going to happen," but it has happened. Yeah.

PF: That's amazing. Now where do you live now? In the arts district or down that way?

CH: I live near the River Arts District. I'm still in the Asheville Housing Authority. In the River Arts District you'll see a street, Bartlett goes from South French Broad and comes down and winds down and goes down to the River Arts District on Depot. What's interesting to me about the River Arts District is that was all Black at one time. And we didn't have no shops. All we had was rundown buildings.

PF: Was that Southside at that time?

CH: Okay, Southside, where you see Choctaw now. I laugh. The only thing that used to be on Choctaw was Reverend Grant's church and Reverend Grant's house. We used to say you could spit and you could cover the whole street. Southside was long as Choctaw. Southside was full of Black businesses. So when the urban renewal came through, it's

like anything--my opinion--anything that represented the Black neighborhood, so the colored neighborhoods, or the Black neighborhoods, it was destroyed. See, and growing up as a child I tell people I was a Negro until my junior high school. Then I became a Black. And before then, if you called a Negro Black that was fighting words. That was pure fighting words to be called Black.

PF: I noticed with the Stumptown group they would, they were older people, and many of them just still referred to themselves as colored.

CH: Yeah, because you were colored, up until they started calling us Negroes, I don't know when they started calling us Negroes. That's all I remember. I remember, I was very nosy, went deep for anything, still do sometime, I was working at this high school in the office. And I was digging when I found they had the old records in there, I thought of digging, trying to find my mama and daddy's high school records. And I found them. And they weren't even classified male and female. They were boy and girl. A Black person or a colored person was not classified as a male or female in this area. You were a boy or a girl. But I did find their records. My daddy was a straight-A student, but he dropped out of school in 1936. He lost his temper--this is his story--he lost his temper in school, jumped on a teacher and beat him up because the teacher was beating his brother with a 2 x 4. And he walked by the room, saw it, run into the room. He intervened, grabbed the 2 x 4, beat the teacher with the 2 x 4 and he said when he finished he know, he said, "My life is over." He thought they were going to put him in jail, and so he just walked out of the school and kept going and never would look back. But they didn't put him in jail.

PF: Probably because of what he had done to the child with all these people watching it.

CH: Yeah. Yeah, that was the Stephens-Lee. That was the Stephens-Lee, but he quit in 1936. My mother graduated from high school in 1940 when the farthest you went in this era was your junior year. That was before you added on your senior year. Her last year of high school was her junior year and the next year they added the twelfth grade on. And during digging to find out about that, what happened was during the war they had children working places, doing things, about the furthest you went was the sixth grade. And then as the war was started ending, they started adding grades on because they didn't know what to do with all these children were working in the factories, because you had adults coming back that needed a job. I was told I didn't dig, but that's when you turned teen age you became into being, during World War II. Then, because you were considered grown sixth grade or eighth grade, you got a job, you worked, but then they kept adding the grades on and the term teenager came out because most people by the time you're in the eighth grade you are 13, you know, 12, 13. And the word teenager started to open more and more and more that give somewhere to go and they kept adding grades on to your school more and more, because they didn't know what to do with the children so the adults could have their jobs. So that's amazing. I said, "Is that why they added college on?" It's not, but, you know.

PF: Well, it's a business now, too, though.

CH: Yeah, it is, it really is. My youngest grandchild is in college. So it really is. But I saw barbershops disappear, dress shops disappear. Downtown we had The Block, which was all Black businesses. They have all disappeared. The Block is now white, you might as well say. Now they wanted to tear down the YWCA--the YMI. I'm sorry, the YMI. But they couldn't. The YMI was built--if everybody would take time to look at the architect

of it, it was built by the man who built the Biltmore House. He built it for the Black slaves, or the Black men, or the Black people, whichever way you want to say it, that helped him build the Biltmore House. They had the proof where a---he was very light-skinned, his grandson still had the plans where his granddaddy helped write out the plans for the Biltmore House. At the end, where he--when they got ready to tear down the YMI, this man stepped up to bat, showed them where the law was written where he built the YMI for the men. Because there used to be like the YW, that was the original YMCA for men. Because that's when men used to travel, people used to travel years ago and they had rooming, and you'd pay a dollar to spend the night, or a few dollars to spend the night. That was the original. That is also where the Black library was. I remember it well as a child, because I got to go every Saturday for a reading group, or we'd plan different things at the Black library.

PF: Do you recall his name, the man that had those plans and all?

CH: Sam--oh, what is Sam's last name?

PF: Zoe is going to ask me.

CH: His first name is Sam. He has a Muslim last name now. He changed his last name. Samuel Abdul. Samuel Abdul, he's still right here in Asheville. His granddaddy had the original plans. Oh, there was a big article, I mean news articles about it and Sam presented the plans. And they were talking about tearing down the YMI. It's now the YMI Culture Center.

PF: Oh, there's already some stuff out there on it then. Good, good.

CH: Yeah, because it was the Black library. I'm trying to remember. I think it was a beauty parlor. It was the gym, which is still there to use more for plays and stuff, really, because it was upstairs. It has a kitchen in it. Downstairs was offices. Then on the corner of Market Street and Eagle Street was the Black pharmacy. You had a pharmacy. We had where you could go in and buy ice cream and stuff. I can see the man's face clear as a bell, but I can't remember his name who ran it for years. Ever since I can remember as a child growing up. But the front now is offices where they were trying to archive a lot of stuff. How well they've done I don't know. I haven't been up there in years, like I used to go on a regular basis. I worked up there as a receptionist for years.

PF: At the YMI?

CH: Uh-huh, yeah. The YMI Culture Center. Wanda Henry Coleman ran it for years. And I was so excited and I used to tell them my hardest job was covering her back. Because she was the only woman, Black woman, in Asheville that had the title she had. She had executive director, a Black woman in Asheville with that title? Wow. She had a college degree and everything. In fact, I know for a fact she graduated from high school in 1965, because she graduated with my oldest sister. But I worked up there for years. It was interesting. They were trying to tear it down and they was fighting, no, you can't tear this down because in his provision of Vanderbilt building that, that was part of it that could never be torn down. And when they really started looking at it and saw the architecture, of how it is made from the same materials as part of the Biltmore House, they started striving to preserve it. And by the time--I can't remember--

PF: Because that same architect, the general one out there, they have houses by him all over that they are preserving.

CH: That's right. They do. I had heard it said both ways. I've heard that he once owned all of Asheville. But then I've heard that he only owned part of Asheville. So I don't know, you know. What was it, years ago they said a man could walk the land and claim it for his, say this is mine. That baby been long gone. But I don't know all the history about the YMI, but they couldn't tear it down because they wanted to.

PF: Now when the arts district started changing, because you say you've always lived fairly close to what we call the arts district now, River Arts District. When did that start this movement towards arts?

CH: I suppose close to 2000. It hasn't been any huge length of time. I remember as a child, growing up, that's where the train station was. And it was beautiful. Oh, it was beautiful. I remember the pink marble floors and pink marble benches. It was sort of an outing sometimes for people. People who were economically poor. They could always go and educate their children. They could always think of free places to take them, and one of the places was the train station. We used to go to the train station on a regular basis. We had cousins who would come here, some from Washington, DC. They would ride the train down. Or other times, or my daddy was more of a history buff. And he would take us places and just show us different things.

PF: I wonder why they took it down?

CH: Because it was in a Black neighborhood. The one you just mentioned.

PF: I understand that, but the building itself? I mean they left that hotel which really is kind of just a shell now.

CH: That's unbelievable. That was owned by a Black person.

PF: Was that Keys?

CH: The Keys.

PF: Now why did they not knock it down? That's funny.

CH: I don't know. Just because they were off a side street, I don't know.

PF: Oh, the depot was on the track side.

CH: Well, the depot was the whole thing, but the Keys, everything down there was owned by Blacks, so why they didn't do more destruction, or that's what I call it, Destruction. I don't know. But that train station was beautiful. It would have been beautiful when they started doing the historical thing. They regretted it. They tore down Stephens-Lee. I remember when they tore down Stephens-Lee. My daddy, said they brought a ball in here to tear it down. But it was so well built that it would just bounce off of it. So they had to order a special ball to tear it down because it was--see, he said that's when people built things by hand. Stephens-Lee originally was built. But the train station, it was beautiful. And since Asheville is booming so, they're trying to figure out how to put a train station back. They don't want to put it back down there. But they want to put it in Biltmore and the streets are already too crowded, it's too small. There's no room for a train station.

PF: Oh, my gosh. No.

CH: Yeah, but where the train station was, that spot is still basically open. There's a train went down there.

PF: And actually, from Biltmore, you can get there just going around by where that roundhouse was. It's very close, really.

CH: Yeah, the roundhouse is still there.

PF: No, it's not.

CH: It's not? Oh, they tore it down recently, too?

PF: I was part of the group that stood in front of it when they wanted to take it down. Yeah. It's railroad property.

CH: Yes, it is.

PF: The railroad owned it. The Preservation Society tried to stop it but it's railroad property. They hardly even got answers from them. They were, basically it's our property, we can do what we want. And, of course, they've done nothing with the property now. I don't know what their reason would be to do it, but just to see it there.

CH: I can just give you my own opinion. Different things happen in the projects. Livingston and on up, I have noticed last year, two years ago, a young man got killed up the street. And when they took the pictures, if they would have taken the pictures straight forward, what you would have seen the beginning of the River Arts District, instead the newspaper and all the news pictures they took was on Palmer Street. They took it like the

street is an L. This would have showed the River Arts District, they took the pictures on the news this way [motioning]. Which showed just where the apartments were and that street, which is still basically--we don't have any all-Black neighborhoods in Asheville anymore. And that's okay. And somebody said, "Well, that's because we don't care." We really don't. Different movie stars have moved here. And people said, "So, who cares if they live here." They saw them walking and they like Asheville because we hey and keep going. Now Beyonce moved here, it would be a different story.

[Laughter.]

CH: But as a whole, you know, last night we was right up in the Fletcher area, you know, Fairview area. I think it's more Fairview area, where they say she has an awesome home, where her and her husband have bought the elementary school he went to. And they're turning it into a center for the entire neighborhood.

PF: And who was that that's doing it? Gladys Knight?

CH: Gladys Knight, yeah. Gladys Knight and the Pips. Her and her husband, they live out there.

PF: And then Roberta Flack was from out there.

CH: Yeah, Roberta Flack is from Black Mountain area. And Andie McDowell, you know. My grandson used to hang with her grandson, and I'd take him out there. And he wanted to know who brought him out there. And she says, "Doesn't your grandmother want to come in?" And I said, "No, I don't want to go in her house." I went to her wedding though.

PF: Oh, really.

CH: I went to one of her weddings and wanted to go for a reason. My grandson was invited and he took his mother and myself with him because if growing up as a child or anything my grandparents got to do is wait on people at that. My daddy was a well-known chauffeur for different families in the Biltmore Forest area. My mother was a housekeeper for different families in the Biltmore Forest area.

PF: Now can you name some, just off the top of your head, some of the families?

CH: Veeches was the main one my mother worked for.

PF: Veeches?

CH: Gene Veech. Well, Jean Veech just died about a year ago, but her inlaws, they lived out in Biltmore Forest, too. Not too many people--Jean Veech was a hardball. She would do things with intent, like she invited a Black lady to live in her home and was a big hell(?). "Well," she says, "it's my home, do something about it." They couldn't. She--I used to always get tickled at Ms. Veech. She took a stand anything she truly believed in. And if you pushed her tool hard, she'd look at you and say, "But I'm richer than you." She knowed she was. She knew how rich she was. And she would tell you that and to other people who lived out there. In fact, she moved out of Biltmore Forest and bought a home in Black Mountain, she said because she as sick of them, she was sick of them and their snobbiness and she did, you know. Oh, she could, you know. She was an awesome person, very intelligent, very good to talk with. Mmmm. So much of my childhood. Ask me some questions.

PF: [Laughter.} What other things would you like to talk about, as far as Asheville, how it's grown, places.

CH: It's grown, I wish it would stop growing so much.

PF: I've been here 38 years and that's a while to see it.

CH: Yeah, but I miss our little sleepy town. I didn't miss--I used to get tickled, some people move here and they just criticize and stuff. I say "Go back where you came from, what did you come here for?"

PF: Exactly. That's the problem, though, they've come here, they've changed it and now it'll just be like so many cities. Even the River Arts District, it used to be, I mean I've always gone there, in and out, you know. And it's nice what they're doing but--

CH: My granddaughter called me.

[Phone break.]

PF: When they were still the Black communities, did you visit in other Black communities that you could remember?

CH: Basically you grew up in your own community and then when you hit middle school, that was when you started going to the other communities.

PF: Socializing.

CH: Yes, socializing, hanging with friends, because that's when all the elementary schools came together, was at Hill Street, because that's where middle school, the seventh and eighth grade, was. Hill Street. Before then, as we say, you knew the people in your

own neighborhood, everybody was your mama, you had to mind everybody. If they told my mama on me, I was in trouble, big trouble, because wouldn't play that. So, yeah, I didn't start visiting other neighborhoods, basically, till I got in middle school and high school. And there wasn't a thing of trying to keep each other away, you just did, you had your neighborhood. I miss having neighborhoods. I really do. I miss the, I think one of the things that started breaking up neighborhoods was the ranch style homes. Before then the older homes had the big porches. And in the spring and summer and fall, that's what you did in the evenings, you sit out on your porch and people walking up and down the street you spoke to them, and they spoke to you, and they knew you were so-and-so's child, you know. And as I tell people, you breathe wrong, somebody tell your mama. Yeah, so I miss neighborhoods, because that's what we had. And I'm getting tickled with some of them newer homes as they are changing and as I say, I see things go around in that circle. More and more the newer homes their building, they have porches on them again. Not as big, you know. I'm blessed. I have quote unquote some white friends, her name is Dutch, she lives off of Montford. She has a large porch. In fact, on one end of her porch is a table. I've been over to her house several times and we sit out there and eat dinner. The other half of her porch is the chairs and the swing. And I love sitting in that swing on her porch. Her husband, I don't know if her husband is a Japanese or Chinese. I really don't know. But they've been together, met in college, and they've been together since then.

PF: What is their last name?

CH: Dutch. I could call her right quick and ask her

[Laughter.]

CH: I have no idea. I don't know. I really don't know. But we have a good friendship and we met over our grandchildren. Children she adopted and my grandchild became friends, and that's how we met. So I've been knowing her maybe--my granddaughter is going to her senior year of college. So I maybe met her seven years ago? And we had a friendship to develop. I'm blessed. I just see people. I guess growing up I was teased and picked on because I was tall, skinny, wore glasses and I had hair down to my waist. I chopped my own hair off when I was in first grade because I got tired of people pulling my hair and teasing me because of my long hair. That was one of the whippings I got, for cutting my own hair. And I have never really let it grow back completely since then. But I remember segregation extremely well and so much is going on now. It's like you get one group trying to pull you back into it, and you got another group trying to say "Stay out," you know. I don't think it ever will go back as bad as it was. I don't think it can. I really don't, because you have people who are intelligent enough to accept people as people. And you have those others who want to hold you in bondage. And I just tune them out and keep going. Even right now, I'm working with the SCSEP program, senior citizen program because I'm 66 years old. I'm out to the humane society and I'm the only, other than a lady that comes and cleans up, I'm the only Black in the front, dealing with the dogs and the people and the cats. So it's, my life has just been like that, all of my life. I'm always in the situation where, okay. For years I went to West Asheville Assembly of God church and about ten years and I was the only Black there the majority of the time. And I didn't care. I wanted to know more about Jesus. And I was tickled again, see. Things turn around. West Asheville Assembly of God bought property in there, at the Crossroad

Assembly of God. It's at the crossroad of I-26 and I-40. You can see it from the expressway. Getting there is a different ballgame, but you can see it. And they changed the name to Crossroads Assembly of God. That building is now the River of Life, which is a majority Black church.

[Laughter.]

CH: Yeah, so I was sitting there one time thinking, "Wow. How things happen in my life." And a great deal of the people, some of the people who went to West Asheville Assembly of God are beginning to come there to church. Yeah. So it's interesting in that area, also. I have nieces and nephews, and I have a grandson that has quote unquote, they call it a mixture. Smart aleck mouth of mine. I say, "Mixed? Mixed, what they mixed with? Human being with human being?" So, you know, that's in my family and always has been.

PF: Now how many children do you have?

CH: I have two. I had two. My children were ten years apart. My daughter's 46. If my son was alive, he would be 37. He died in a car wreck, killed at 17, between his junior and senior year of high school. It was one of those biggies in Asheville. You may remember it. Two students from Asheville High coming back from a football camp in Greensboro died. One hour away from home in Morganton.

PF: I believe I do remember that. I remember one like that.

CH: It was a big deal. It was a big deal. And I, it was quite an experience. That was my first time experiencing the peace of God that surpasses man's understanding, because I

was totally at peace. And people kept wanting to, they told it to my pastor, told him I'd cracked up. And I told him, I said, "It's not my fault. When I get by myself in the corner I be going 'God, am I all right'." You know, because, you know. But, yeah, that was 20 years ago now.

PF: Yeah, I remember that.

CH: Yeah, that was my son, my only son. But he had a child and that's the child that I've had since she was three days old. She turned one on May 5th of 1997. He died in a car wreck June 25th of 1997. So he gave her her first birthday party and everything. But I had had her since she was three days old. So, in a way, it's like she's my child and I don't believe in lying or false, so she's always known. "I'm your mommy."

PF: Because it is different, yeah.

CH: Yeah, it is. But, yeah, so my two children and I don't regret that and I've never been married. I don't want to get married at this age. [Laughing.] So I'm, I have a peace and a contentment about, "Okay. This is my life and I enjoy it to the best of my ability." But it was, I was in one of--I remember ACE Corps and they were protesting because places like Winn-Dixie didn't hire Blacks. They were peaceful protests, because Asheville didn't have any violent protests, Asheville mainly had peaceful protests. In high school and they would go picket places like at Winn-Dixie or other businesses that would not hire Blacks. At that time Negroes. And I know my daddy had a old station wagon, wherever there were protests, you know, on Saturdays, he would go and park and just sit and watch. I don't know what his plans were.

PF: Maybe he would watch to step in or something, be a presence.

CH: Yeah, he was watching his children. Yeah. He was watching his children, make sure his children were all right. A lot of my Saturdays grow up was sitting in the car, looking at my brothers and sisters in these peaceful protests. We mainly had--the most violent protest we had in Asheville was the first year they integrated high school. And that totally happened because they would not listen to the students. And you can't bring all these students together and not listen to their complaints. And what it started over was a young man, I think he's dead now, Gaines--Leo Gaines--did not have socks on. And they suspended him. But at that time, white students were allowed to come to school barefooted and walk around.

PF: Oh, my gosh.

CH: They suspended him because they said he was not properly dressed. And a big fight broke out and the fight went from Lee Edwards which was now Asheville High, all the way up the street to South French Broad High School. And I had graduated the year before. I never will forget. I was a cashier in Mason's. My brother came to tell me, "I'm so glad you're out of high school."

PF: Now, what is Mason's?

CH: Mason's was a department store where Big Lots is now. Where Big Lots and Home Depot is was Mason's. It was like a Sky City or K-Mart or Walmart, but that's where it was located. And I was a cashier there. And my brother came to tell me "I'm so glad you're out of school because you'd have been right in the middle of it." And I said, "Yeah,

you're right. I would have." But I have seen life grow in Asheville. We have very few Black businesses in Asheville anymore. I used to tell young people, "Go to Durham. Go to Greensboro. Go somewhere where they're progressive. But they want to see it grow. Until this day, I'm trying to think. Other than a beauty shop--do we have any Black doctors left? Or have they all died off? I can't think of any.

PF: Even among the bigger professional things, they don't have Black doctors? That have come in from other places?

CH: Not that I personally--I don't work in the medical community anymore, but not that I personally know of. We have several Black attorneys. Gene Ellison would be a awesome person, because he grew up in Hillcrest, which is one of the apartment complexes. And he is a millionaire now and a lawyer, and his mother--I don't know if his mother was married or not, I don't remember, but she raised all her children and Gene Ellison out of her children. The rest of them, to my knowledge, have done well. But he's a lawyer, he's a millionaire. But he grew up in Hillcrest. He is also a testimony of determination, being able to make it. I remember hearing him speak years ago and he spoke on the fact that by his sophomore year of college he realized he needed tutors to keep going and how he asked for them, you know, so, yeah. Because he went, I would say the majority of his school was integrated, because he was younger than I am. One of his older sisters graduated from high school with me.

PF: I used to see him quite often. I was a paralegal for a few years and I would see him, you know, just down and around downtown and all. But I haven't seen him for a long time.

CH: He's over at Executive Park now. He was originally, quote unquote, Asheville Colored Hospital which turned into Jessie Ray's Funeral Home and years it sit empty, but then it ended up being Gene Ellison's law offices. And somebody went in there one day and tried to rob his secretary, off the street. It was on the news and everything.

PF: I vaguely remember that. A long time ago.

CH: Yeah, it was on the news and everything, because I know in my mind I said, "What's in a lawyer's office? They don't have cash money and stuff." And it was shortly after this, to my knowledge, he moved to the Executive Park. And I can understand it, because to my knowledge, he has had the same assistant since he started. Her name is Cynthia, in fact. And my granddaughter worked for him a couple summers ago. But he would be a good one to interview about the history of Asheville, because he tried to help buy different parts of The Block at one time.

PF: I think he did own a restaurant around the corner, at the bottom of it. Uh-huh.

CH: Yeah, I think he sold it. I'm not sure, but I think he sold it. But it's interesting, all the businesses. There were mainly cafeterias over there, barbershops, beauty shop. And then on that corner, they had the YMI on this corner with the drugstore right there, and on the next corner you had, oh, these names keep going straight out of my mind, just as I get ready to say them. But it was the jewelry store. We had our own jewelry store because during the segregation we just didn't go in other businesses. We just weren't welcome there. I remember a couple of my daddy's friends were even lighter than my daddy. My daddy was very light, but they were even lighter than him. And the way they made money is they would bet people that they could go in the Imperial Theater, or go in places

when Blacks were not allowed. But because they were so light, they could pass for whites. That's how they made their money. They bet people.

[Laughter.]

CH: So it was interesting. And another job my daddy had, I told you about the A&P. I'm trying to think what else was it. He started out--we have a picture of him working in the dry cleaners, Swannanoa Dry Cleaners, when the only one we had was down on Church Street.

PF: Have you been in that area since they took the Swannanoa Cleaners down?

CH: Mainly just--

PF: Well, you need to go and stand right where that was. I love--I have a picture of it. If I remember, I'm going to show you when I'm done. There was a church inside the Swannanoa Cleaners building.

CH: No, I didn't know that. I know some big churches on Church Street.

PF: Right, but it was a little church and I guess that's why they just built around it rather than take it down. And when you go there, in that what is now a parking lot for the church across the street, that was when they took it down, the outline of it, where it is stuck on the building next to it, is still there. I call it The Ghost Church. And it's a wonderful scene. I mean, when you see it, it's just neat. You'd like seeing that.

CH: Yeah, I would. I don't know if you remember the old chapel at St. Joseph Hospital?

PF: I think I've actually been in it. My husband, like 30 years ago or something, was in the hospital there and it was--there was a--

CH: It was a small chapel, a small quote unquote Catholic chapel.

PF: Yeah.

CH: But it was beautiful.

PF: It was like a little bitty church, it even had pews in it.

CH: Yes. Yes, made just like a small church inside that hospital. And when they built it, you know, basically it was at the end. But then as they grew, they built around it. But then they decided that it needed to be torn down. Everybody says that entire place just trembled when they tore that chapel down. Because that was God speaking. So, yeah, in the hospitals, the chapel they have in the hospital now, mmmm, it's just sad. Because I worked there, the last time I did volunteer work. I don't like being still and it was during the time you couldn't find a job hardly. And so I did volunteer work and I chose to work at the old St. Joseph campus instead of the Mission campus. And they have changed all the chapels so to you don't know it's a chapel. Because they say they have to honor all the religions. And it's sad, it's so sad.

PF: Well, can't you do that in a nice setting, religious setting, though. Gosh.

CH: To me you should be able to. But they all so--when I was there--I'm turning 66 now, maybe 4 years ago was when I was there. It would have to be 2013, 2014, they also were getting rid of all the chapels. They only had one per hospital where they used to have one to cover all the different, one Catholic, one Methodist, Baptist. And I thought "Too bad

people died, then.” Because as a volunteer, one of my responsibilities, one of the things we could do, when somebody had a living will or the medical living will, they would need witnesses. They would call us up to be the witness. And it ended up the lady was a combination of a chaplain and a lawyer. That was the only one they kept at St. Joseph's campus. I looked at her, I said, "How you do it?" She shook her head. She couldn't even talk. Because, you know, that's a 24-hour job. I got tickled, told them I was a Christian, it's one of the jobs I had. And I won't cause confusion, but they told me, after they hired me, after they liked my work, then they started telling me to be careful what you say, because we are not religious. I said, "I'm not either. I'm a Christian.” And I told you that before you hired me. I make it a point. I don't try to push Jesus on anybody. But I'm not going to deny him to anybody.

PF: And if somebody else needs that comfort and your compassion with them.

CH: Well, one day when she called me in where I was working--where I am now, because I did, I told them and I felt a freedom there that I didn't feel everywhere. One of the places was St. Joseph's Hospital, I will say that. I couldn't believe it. They told me, "You got to stop praying.” I say, "When?" Because I wondered what did I do. "We heard,” because I knew the word of God even tells you don't do stuff to bring attention to yourself. So when somebody asked me to pray for them, it would be one on one in private. It would not be out in the open. But I figured out what it was. My supervisor and I did not get along well at all. But I knew I was there to learn something. So every day I would go to work early. I would go in the hospital chapel and pray and seek God's face for leadership and guidance. I got to the place, I'd get to work and it was locked. So I

went, I said, "Why are you locking the chapel now?" They'd say they heard somebody was going in there praying.

PF: In the chapel. Okay. [Laughter.]

CH: And I wasn't a Catholic, so.

PF: Oh, I see.

CH: There's a scripture in the Bible that says "Call no man Father." So I wouldn't call the Catholic father Father. I called him Mister, yes, sir, no, sir, very polite. I tried to be very polite and very respectful. And he told me one day, "You will call me Father." I said, "No, I will not either." So I made it a point to keep me a Bible in my locker, and they did call me in one day, and they told me why I was being called in and I took my own Bible with me and showed them the scripture. I said, "Now if you can outweigh that then, I want to see it." They come in and they said, "Go back to your job." "Okay." I had a rough time. It was okay, it was okay. I've been blessed to have such a lot of good experiences as a Christian, as a female, and as a Black person. Because I found out some people, they still count us as women as second-class citizens. And that's painful. To know right in the United States of America--

PF: That's not just Black women. It's white women, too. It's women. You're right, yeah. I mean, there's just that little pat you on the arm kind of thing, you know.

CH: Like you're supposed to pacify.

PF: Yeah, when you say something that's not what they're used to hearing, it's like, "Can you imagine she said that?" But a man could say the exactly same thing and they'd think, "Yeah, yeah, I hadn't thought about that."

CH: Terry Bellamy was City Mayor. One of the questions I loved that they asked her, "How do you expect to be a wife and a mother of two children and do this, this and this with the City." She said, "If I was a man, you wouldn't ask me that question."

PF: That's exactly right.

CH: "Oh, girl, you go." That's what I mean. In growing, if people mature, they realize what I go through as a woman, you go through as a woman. It has nothing to do with the color of our skin. I had to tell my granddaughter that some men--she was talking about they was going to the movies the other night and some men got in an argument. I said, "Some men think they have a right to put their hand on a woman any way they want to." I said, "They're that stupid." I said, "They are that misinformed." I said, "When it happens, you just stop them."

PF: Yeah, I know somebody else that thinks like that.

CH: Yeah, we do. We won't call his name. [Laughing.] They wonder why we're like we are. Look at the leader. They say whatever at the top falls down and I have often wondered, "God you're talking to us in the United States. Do we hear you? Do we hear you every day, no matter what, as long as they can--I won't even say the word what he does, it disrupts everything. Yeah, it's a sadness, it's a great sadness.

PF: Anxiety.

CH: Yeah. Yeah. It's building the anxiety, the tension, the stress. Yes, we need to--if we haven't prayed, we need to really start, everybody. But I don't know what else I can tell you about my childhood. That day, when the lady who told you about me, and she and I were talking, just things were like popping, different things she would say. I said, "Oh, yeah, I remember this, I remember that about it." We was just talking. And she said to me, "I know this lady at the library. Can she interview you?" I said, "Sure, why not."

PF: That's great.

CH: So teenage years, going through things. It's like I said, I remember going through so many things, as a woman, a female, as a Black woman. I used to tell people I was free in Jesus. I said, "I may never be free in this world, this society. Number one because I'm a female and number two because I'm Black, but the female was first. Because as you're growing, like, you see how people will mistreat people because of their gender, because of their nationality, and it's so sad. Yet you're supposed to be so intelligent. Where's your intelligence level?

PF: Which is really saying something more about them, but at the same time, it doesn't make it feel any better. It makes it, in a way, even sadder.

CH: It does to me make it sadder, yeah. Yes.

PF: I thought you had a whole lot of questions. Well, that's it. We kind of go with the flow, depending on what--because each person has a different area that they grew up in, different outlook, you know, different like that. And I had--the things I've written down ahead of time, you've pretty much covered. I had when you were born, the River Arts

District, family, friends in other areas, Stumptown and Montford, South Slope now they call that. Eagle District. You covered that.

CH: One of the things my mother, two things--well, my daddy grew, I grew up hearing this all my life and it has stayed with me. To get respect you have to give respect, from 8 to 88. And I never have forgotten that.

PF: So in another 22 years you will be unencumbered.

[Laughter.]

CH: That's true. That's true. But my mother said, "Show them your intelligence. They want you to act ignorant. They expect you to act ignorant. Show them your intelligence." And I have noticed how you will blow people's minds. I constantly hear, "You sure you're from Asheville?" "Yes, I am." "Were you raised in Asheville?" "Yes, I was." I left for many a time. I never stayed a whole year. I always ran back to these mountains. I finally gave up on a Ashevillian. So it is--we do have--sometimes I think the larger mix of people we get, sometimes I think it better. Sometimes I think it's worse. I even hate it when they come in and they see all our wrong and they think they change us instantly.

PF: Because wrong based on what?

CH: Well, I say this, if the south is so backwards, if the south was so ignorant, we wouldn't still be here. And I get tickled at how many people think because we're North Carolina we're in the North, nowhere in the south. I get tickled. I said, "South Dakota is in the north. It's not in the south." I think--I have this saying, I say, "God sits up in

heaven, he's just cracking up." He's just laughing. He says, "I made things so easy and so simple for them, and they make it all so hard."

PF: That's a good way to look at it. Yeah. This is a list of things we brought up for something else, but I think you've pretty much covered it. Do you remember the music scene, at all, in Asheville? Like, did you have a thing when you were growing up, or as a teenager?

CH: As a teenager, the YWCA. The YMCA used to have dances every Friday night. And we didn't have to pay but a quarter to get in. They ended at 11 o'clock, because the majority of our curfews was 12 midnight. You had to be in the house before 12 midnight. We had--the Orange Peel was a Black nightclub. At first it was a bowling alley. And then it turned into it was a Black nightclub.

PF: Where the Orange Peel is now?

CH: Same. They got the same name but it was a Black nightclub and we had famous people coming in who ended up being big folks. Oh, Gladys Knight. Oh, so many of them come into my mind yet their names are not coming. Different stars that got to be topnotch stars came into Asheville, North Carolina. We also had up the street, I don't know how to even describe--it was a club called the Kitty Kat. And you had to go--it came from Biltmore Avenue. It was right up the street from the Orange Peel, opposite side of the street. Then you walked, you went down steps into it. We had that. We had the Owl Lounge which was down on Southside, which was the more sophisticated, refined group of Blacks went there. The Owl Lounge. We had different little, what they called juke joints. Or joints they called them, all through Southside, where people went and sit

and listened to music. We had our poolroom, which was up on The Block, where young men--ladies didn't go in the poolroom, it was just all males, Black males at that time. We had next to one of the main barbershops, and when you started down Eagle Street, that's on the right-hand side of the street went down, and that was called Down in the Hole. That was a nightclub. Ladies didn't go in there. I got put out one night. I wanted to see and hear a friend of mine singing from out of town. And some guys that were in there put me out. They said, "Ladies don't come in here. You're a lady." "Yeah, but that's my friend and I'm grown," and I went back in there and they picked me up, under my arms, and took me and set me outside and said, "Ladies don't come in here." I said, "Okay." It was like my big brother. My big brother, the one that's, let's see, he's nine years older than me. Different places I'd go, I was 21, had a child, I had my own car, and I would go places and he would walk in and say, "Go home." And I'd get up and leave. And I had different friends say, "I wouldn't leave." I thought, "We're not going to get to fight in front of them." Because I would fight him, but as a lady, you didn't do things out in the street to bring attention to yourself. I was raised with that. My daddy was--I smoked cigarettes years ago, but ladies didn't smoke in the streets. Certain things ladies didn't do. Drunk and go in the street, ladies didn't smoke cigarettes in the street, you know, you had so much that was instilled in you, it was just in the heart of you. And most of that's gone now, too. I believe I was raised in a good family, as a whole. I've matured. I hear a lot of people, even my age, want to blame their mamas and daddies. I don't. I say to people, "Well, when are you going to be old enough to be responsible for yourself and make it better." I have a sister I even say that to. There's two years, three years older than me. I say, "Mama, when you going to be old enough to be responsible for yourself?" She'll get

mad at me, but I believe I've grown--I believe everybody's parents did the best they could do with what they had to deal with. And then you're supposed to be older than that. That's what each--real parents, that's what they want to do. They want to help you grow up. Because it's a real world out there. And I can't think of anything else.

PF: Do you remember the polio epidemic?

CH: Yeah. My picture was in the paper. First time I was in the paper, I was six years old, five or six. I had no front teeth. My mother was, like I said, she was short and fat. So I guess, six years old, that would have been in 1955, '56. Because I was born in '51. So it might have been up to '57, but it's a picture of me on the front page of the paper. I kept it for years. I think it finally crumpled up. But my mama had to hold me down. Because then you had to go a number of places to get those shots. You know, lined up, it was so bad you lined up. There was lines of people. And in my picture, my mama had her arm across me. You could see this big old fat arm and my mouth wide open bawling, and under the picture it says, "Look, ma, no teeth." Yes, I remember polio shots. Yes. I remember lining up for them and going to get them. Yeah, so my picture was in the paper even then. Now, like I said, that had to be '57. I was five, six, seven years old, because I was born in '51. Yeah, but my picture was in the paper. Front page, I think.

PF: That would be kind of late in the game, probably, for polio.

CH: Yeah, but we had to get three shots, I think. I think so.

PF: Yeah. And then they came in with the little sugar cube that had some drip-drop on it. But that was late. That was even much later. Yeah.

CH: Girl, you got that shot. Yeah, we were lined--it's sad to say it, but it's like you lined up like cattle almost. But you were lined up in a line to get that shot. And I wasn't going for it. My mama had to hold me down. Yeah. I tell people, they want to talk about--when my son died, I refused to talk to the newspaper. And I told them I had my 15 seconds of fame and fortune all my life.

PF: You were smart. Because they always take the most sensational thing, or they turn it around and they take it out of context. Anything I've ever seen that I knew anything about, it's not the whole story. They take out one line and it's crazy.

CH: In my teenage years, I was among the first integrated group to go to Washington, DC, to represent the YWCA. My picture was in the paper again. So that anywhere, about '67, 66, something like that. My picture was in the paper because I was part of that group. We went to Washington, DC. And it's no record of it that I know of. There was only news, but, oh, Lord. I was a junior in high school. I really did the first Martin Luther King march in the City of Asheville. I was a junior in high school. It was so cold that day it was unreal. It was in January. It was in the thirties. We left South French Broad School and marked to downtown. It was snowing. The wind was blowing. I looked at the different men who was with us and there were quite a few--it may not have been 20 of us, if there was that many, but it was like their mustaches were frozen. I don't forget my minister was there at that time. He's dead and gone, too, J. T. Jones. Reverend Toms was there. He was the minister at New Mount Holly for years. And there was quite a few ministers there. Oh, me and my smart aleck mouth. I will never forget, my minister started trying to tell me what to do and said, "I advise you to be quiet." I said, "You weren't here to organize it. You weren't here when we were going through what we had to

go through to get the City's permission.” I said, "Now you want to show up. You want to give orders. I don't think so.” I stayed in trouble one way or the other. Never real serious trouble. I had to [ ] my mama. I did. I grew up in the church. I do not know the fear of God. But I knew the fear of my mama. And she used to tell all of us, "If you ever get in trouble, they're going to put you in jail. And I know all the police well enough,” and she did. They knew her by name. Until, she said, "When I get up there I'm going to say 'Give me five minutes in this cell with them, that's all I want'.” And it scared all of us straight. None of us never got in serious trouble. But in that era, I'm serious, she knew the white policemen, how she knew them all I don't know. But she did. And we would be out, even me being the youngest one, and most of us--my oldest brother graduated in 1958. I graduated in '69. Everybody else graduated in the sixties. As we say, we could be out with our friends and our buddies, acting up, whatever. The police, how they knew us, I don't know. But within your community they would look at us and say, "Li'l Hallum, I'm going to tell your mama on your.” And we would hurry up and straighten up. I used to tell, "I'm going to jail so you can't whup me.” She said, "Try it.” But I also knew that you couldn't whup a child and not scar them. Because my mama did not play and I used to say she used to whup me--I used to lie on her and say, "She whupped me for her exercise, she didn't have nothing else to do.” Because I was always doing something. And she didn't play. I used to say, "I want to do so and so.” Building of Matthews Ford and it was on Biltmore Avenue, up behind. Lee Walker Heights was up the hill from it. We had a hill we used to slide down on cardboard boxes. And went into the back of Matthews Ford when they were building it. And we would be told, "Don't go over there.” One time we were getting ready to go somewhere and my mother had all three of her girls dressed in

totally white. And she had told us to sit there on the couch. She had something she had to do. I walked out the back door, went and was sliding down that hill, in all that white. And I looked up and who was standing at the top of that. I had to climb back up that hill and who was standing there looking at me. But I thought about it. I was that type of child. I thought, "I want to go slide down the hill." She said, "Don't go over there." If I go and she catch me, I'm going to get a whupping. But if she don't catch me..." I don't know who I thought I was, stupid. All white. All right, slide down. It was a red clay hill, sliding down. Yeah, we were going in there. Matthews Ford, sliding down that hill and getting whuppings for sliding down the hill. I mean, at times everybody went, you know. That's how you say you saved the cardboard boxes. They made great slides down the steep hill. So, yeah. Playing outside, like I said, that was--you caught lightning bugs in a jar. You knew, as we say--I tell people "Dark 30 you're supposed to be home." You knew when it started, especially the street lights come on, you better be home. Because you had to be right in front of your home, no more playing. You weren't allowed to be on the other side of Lee Walker Heights. And Lee Walker Heights at that time had a big old field. We grew up in 10 Building. Across the street was the clotheslines and a big huge field where the boys played baseball and football all the time. In the middle was a smaller place--between in the middle of the circle was a smaller place for mainly the girls played hopscotch and jackstones and, you know, just different little ring games. And that was our growing up. We played together and that was it. When somebody's mama spoke to you, you said, "Yes, ma'am." You weren't paranoid of parents leading your children the wrong way then. You weren't paranoid. You know, you didn't--my youngest granddaughter, I'll never forget, at the age of five she wouldn't go outdoors anymore. And

I kept saying, "Oh, why don't you go outdoors? What's wrong?" She looked at me, she said, "Don't you listen to the news? In the past week it's been two little five-year-old girls was stole out of their own front yard." And I looked at her, thinking to myself, "Yeah, I heard about it but I didn't think you were listening." You know. So that's why people, it's not just the gangs that are keeping kids inside, it's what's going on on the outside. Who do you trust? Yeah, I would say that was the greatest part about my childhood, playing, being free to play. Came home from school. You took your school clothes off. You put on your play clothes. You might get something to eat, something to snack on. After homework, only after homework, you could go outdoors and play. But you had to do your homework first.

PF: My third child talks about when, you were saying about playing out till a certain time, my third child tells about they would be out playing and have to go to the bathroom so bad, but they didn't dare if it wasn't dark enough yet, because if they came in and it was just sort of dark, I'd say, "Well, it's getting dark, you might as well stay in." And so they didn't push that till they had to.

CH: And you didn't go in other people's home, either. Maybe certain neighbors, but you didn't--

PF: Oh, no, no. Not just to go to the bathroom.

CH: I remember as a child, my mother, and like I said, Lee Walker Heights A&P grocery store was at the bottom of the hill. If my mother had to go to the grocery store for something, she would say to the next-door neighbor, "I'm going to the store. Will you listen out for my children?" And they did. They looked out for neighbors. Yeah, whether

it took Mama five minutes or ten, because when she went major grocery shopping, my brothers always went with her so they could help carry groceries back home. Because it was just down the hill. And I remember at that time you didn't have many parking spaces, because everybody didn't have a car. And now in Lee Walker Heights, I don't know if you've been up there lately, what used to be our playground they've turned into a parking lot. People park cars. And then even in the front they made more parking spaces. I be going, "What about the children? What about the children? Where do they play now?

PF: Most of them don't play outdoors, even in neighborhoods, you know. They've got huge yards and yet it's like a deserted TV set or something.

CH: Yeah. I remember when we had homes and stuff, what I would consider Main Street, because when I was five years old, one of our church members, Miss Betsy Moore was sick. And at five years old, my brothers would walk me, we would walk down Lee Walker Heights, across Pfifer, Southside, all them was right together. They would get me across there. They would go on to Hill Street to school and I would go the opposite way. Five years old. I could walk to Miss Dix's house on Bartlett by myself. And there was no problem, no fault. Even in the old school I had friends that lived on down on Southside. I could walk to their houses, you know, different people that you knew of. Your parents--you had to know them, your parents had to know them. You could walk to their houses. But now you wouldn't dare send your daughters out, you know. Yeah, the world, as the scripture says, we're going to get wiser and weaker. I think we're there.

PF: Wiser and weaker?

CH: Yeah. My granddaughter even said to me, you see all these places now where you don't have to go buy your groceries, you just call in, phone it in. I said, "I can't imagine someone else picking my groceries out."

PF: I thought the same thing. The freshness or--yeah.

CH: One of her friends has gotten a job and she said, "I don't think I would like it." I said, "I don't think I would either," where you call the place, give them your grocery list, they send the person to buy your groceries, and then bring them to you. And it's supposed to happen in an hour's time. I said, "No. If I'm grocery shopping, I'm usually grocery shopping in at least an hour by myself. For someone else, for me to call you?" I said no. Even food is getting so much more and more and more where we're going to sit home, get fat, heart messed up, because we don't have to do anything anymore.

PF: People are even doing that with their dogs. You think the dogs don't get to use their muscles because they're riding around in a little stroller or something, or a grocery basket.

CH: Or they pay someone else to walk their animals.

PF: Even when they could and need the--

CH: Need the exercise themselves.

PF: The women who did work, where there many women--I imagine there were, in the community, that had to work. What kind of things did they do?

CH: Mainly, Black women was housekeepers. I have a classmate who's very light. They said even in the fifties, forties, if the man of the household wanted to sleep with you, you had no other choice, to keep your job.

PF: Oh, my gosh. I had never heard that. I mean, I knew that happened, but I didn't realize that.

CH: Unless you was mean as a rattlesnake, like my mama. Like my mama say, the few jobs she had, she made it one hour and she quit. My mother was the first Black saleslady in a store downtown. You remember Charles's?

PF: No.

CH: Okay. Where the Northwestern Bank used to be, they're turning it into a hotel, in the process now, but along that strip on Patton Avenue was small stores. And one of them was Charles Department Store. My mother worked there, and she was the first Black woman to work there. It was in the early seventies, because my daddy was real sick. He was dying of cancer. And they called the department--my daddy had four major surgeries in 11 days, trying to save his life. I was 19 at that time. My mother worked in Charles and she was, like I say, one of the first Blacks to do, be a salesperson in a department store. And they called home, we called my mama to say my daddy was sick, they were getting ready to operate on him. She said, "Come pick me up." She said she walked up to her boss and said, "I've got to go. They're getting ready to operate on my husband." And the lady said, "If you walk out, you don't have a job." She says she looked at the lady and said, "Goodbye." When we got there, she was standing outside waiting. And she was strong like that, my mother was, and she was saying during her years of doing

housekeeping, said she'd walked off of many a job. So she used to walk home and say, "God, you're going to feed me, one way or the other." And my mother almost had her degree in nursing. She went to nursing school in Tennessee and for some reason she was allergic to the water. It kept making her sick so she had to come back home. But she still, she was an excellent seamstress. She could cook. She was one of these determined people. I was out of high school when this happened to her. They asked her to take a special test. I was out of high school, so it had to be in the seventies. It was her taking a test as a retired--well, she retired then, I think. As a retiree, they tried to get a person out of each teen years to take a test at the Employment Security Commission and they chose her because they were doing comparison with Blacks and whites and different age groups. My mother made the highest grade over all the tests.

PF: Good for her.

CH: And they asked her what was her secret. She said, "Because I continually educate myself." And they asked someone who made low grades, they say "I didn't understand half the questions." And it's amazing to me sometimes in talking to young people, that you have to explain things. Or like with your son, what you were saying about your shirt.

PF: Yes.

CH: My son, I was so blessed. Anything I asked my son, what does this mean, because slang changed so. In my day cool was just cool and it lasted forever. But I'd ask my son what does this mean, what does that mean. He would tell me. A lot of young people nowadays being a grandmother and a great-grandmother, mainly my grandchildren, because all them are grown, I say "Well, what does this mean?" And they laugh at me. I

say, "I didn't ask you a question to be laughed at. I asked you a question because I want the answer." "Don't get too serious." They'll say to me, "You're too serious." I say, "Okaaaay." But it is so much in our lifetime has changed.

PF: Yeah. Do you remember any others, were there like schoolteachers or--you mentioned your mom as being a seamstress.

CH: Oh, yes. My aunt was a secretary, topnotch secretary. I'd say out of people I admired, I admired her the most because she never raised her voice. Her and Phyllis Sherrill had something in common. Phyllis Sherrill was known for this. They could, as we say, get you told, put you in your place, and never raise their voice. And those type of people can make you feel so tiny.

PF: And I had the impression Phyllis was like that her whole life. And she was raised by grandparents.

CH: Well, they say Phyllis never whupped one of her children. She didn't believe in whuppings. Phyllis was the type, her nieces and nephews have told the stories I've heard, that Phyllis could talk to you and you'd cry like a baby just by talking to you and let you know you wrong. My aunt was like that. I admired her. My schoolteachers, I had a teacher in the eighth grade, Miss Smith. I don't remember her first name. But she was going off to Raleigh the last six weeks of school to teach a special class and only top students in the class could go with her. There was four or five with her. But she said, she knew at the beginning of school year, so she told us--

PF: And she was a Black teacher?

CH: Black teacher, a Miss Smith. She says, "You are my students. I'm going to teach you. And I'm going to teach you," because at that time we had four marking periods, six weeks apiece. She says, "I'm going to teach you in three marking periods what I normally would teach you in four. And you will learn what I teach you." And she was an excellent teacher. What she taught me in the eighth grade, it helped carry me all through high school. That's how good she was. She taught us English, social studies, spelling and something else. Was it history? But she was an excellent teacher. I remember her. I remember a Miss Moore, who was a teacher, math teacher. She was very good. She couldn't stand chewing gum. If you were chewing chewing gum in her room I remember she'd say, "You can chew it till the sweet is out, then you just take it out of your mouth." She said, "But you got to start smacking, blowing bubbles or popping, it cannot be in my classroom." She was a very good teacher. I had, I was blessed, but I had a lot of good teachers. A lot of good teachers, I did. Yeah. Miss Kennedy hasn't even been dead that long. She lived to be way up in the hundreds. She was my sixth grade teacher. And they did not play. We had a teacher in fourth grade, Miss Bynum, that went out of the country. She brought back a huge piece of leather, rawhide. Had it cut in strips. Every teacher at Livingston Street almost had a strip of that rawhide.

PF: Oh.

CH: And they could whup us. Now, they didn't scar us. If you did, you saw a mama. We had parents that stood up for us. But I was raised--this is what my mother taught me, "When you get to school, you respect that teacher just like it's your parent. You will not disrespect them. Do not let me get calls about your talking back." Now, I had a man teacher that caught himself whupping me, my mama went to school. I was in the sixth

grade. I was wrong for what I did. But my mama didn't allow my daddy to hit her daughter. My daddy couldn't whip the girls. He could whup my brothers, if they were wrong. Now, Mama whupped everybody. But my mama, no man is to hit their daughters.

PF: Good.

CH: And she said, all her life as a child she got one whupping as a child, she was one of them little perfect children. And that's because her mama told her not to go somewhere, but she had a nickel, she wanted to spend it, so on the way home she went there and spent her nickel and when she got home her mother whupped her for being disobedient. And my mama would hurt you if lied to her, if she found out. Whoo! Better to tell her the truth and get it over with. But she raised us, no man was to hit you. And so my sixth grade teacher, I got real smart aleck with him, he was going to throw me out of the class. When I still got smart with him, he popped me twice with a belt. And I walked out of school, straight home. I did not go the--I went straight home, because I knew my mama said that was a no-no. I got home. I called my mama and told her what happened. She says, "Do not go out of the house." She called the principal and informed him that we would be back to school at 8 o'clock that next morning and we were. And this was my mama's rule. Once the male teacher got in there, she says, you would think she ran the school, "Cynthia, go to class." The principal says--she says, "Huh-uh. She going to class. She's going back to class, unless you want to go to court, it doesn't matter which one." And I tried to stand at the door and listen, and she open that door and said, "I said go to class and go now." And I went back to my class. And I don't know what she said to him or to the principal. Both of them were males. I did not get suspended and they never offered to

hit me again. Later on in life, I asked her, "What did you say to him?" She said, "I told him if he ever put his hand on my daughter again, I would be back and we would find out who was the greatest."

PF: Oh, gosh. Her and Muhammad Ali.

CH: What was that fighter's name, 14 in. measured fists. And that's who they used to compare my mama with. Because she was known to hit people. She said God give her the extra strength because he didn't give her any height. But, yeah, I had a very good mama and I'm very thankful for that because of my attitude, it stank. I had a rotten attitude and if I wouldn't have had a good mama I would have been in trouble. Yep.

PF: Well, I think we've covered just about everything. Unless there's something pops into your mind that you'd like to talk about, I think we're covered.

CH: I'm one of those people could talk to you all day.

PF: But you talk well.

CH: Thank you.

PF: You speak well and you have interesting, and you're concise about what you're telling. It's interesting. Like a story, like anecdotes. That's why I keep encouraging you, I like hearing it.

CH: Well, thank you.

PF: Well, we'll end this. I've enjoyed it.

CH: I've enjoyed you, also.

END OF INTERVIEW.